

Message Text

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ACTION SR-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 SCCT-02 ORM-03 SY-04

USSS-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-07 NSC-07

SP-03 SS-20 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 DRC-01 /120 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4778

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 6626

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, PINS, IT

SUBJECT: THREATS AGAINST VOLUNTARY AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

REF: STATE 095326

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. WE HAVE DISCUSSED GENERAL SUBJECT OF THREATS WITH HIAS AND IRC DIRECTORS IN ROME. BOTH APPEAR TO ACCEPT THREATS AND HARRASSMENTS AS OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD AND BOTH HAVE TAKEN PROTECTIVE MEASURES ON THEIR OWN AND WITH COOPERATION OF ITALIAN POLICE. BOTH EXPRESSED COMPLETE SATISFACTION WITH RESPONSE OF ITALIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO THEIR PORBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. HIAS DIRECTOR ELLER AND IRC DIRECTOR KORACH CALLED AT EMBASSY ON MAY 10 AND 13 RESPECTIVELY AT OUR REQUEST FOR INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF PROBLEM OF THREATS AGAINST THEMSELVES AND STAFF IN ROME. BOTH CONFIRMED INFORMATION REPORTED IN REFTEL.

3. ELLER REVIEWED HISTORY OF THREATS DIRECTED AT HIAS. SHE SAID THESE BEGAN IN 1968 AND HAVE CONTINUED SPORADICALLY UP TO THE PRESENT. THREATS HAVE TAKEN FORM OF VOICELESS TELEPHONE CALL HARRASSMENTS TO ELLER, CASE WORKERS AND EVEN NEIGHBORS OF THE FORMER. HIAS HAS ALSO RECEIVED ENVELOPES OF ANTI-SEMITIC NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, AND IN OCTOBER 1972 A LETTER BOMB WAS DELIVERED TO
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HIAS OFFICE. (ELLER NOTED HIAS MAIL IS SCREENED BY ISRAELI EMBASSY

BUT LETTER BOMB SLIPPED THROUGH.) SINCE LETTER BOMB WAS OF SUCH SUSPICIOUS PROPORTIONS, ITALIAN POLICE WERE CALLED AND TOOK CARE OF MATTER. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN A NUMBER OF BOMB SCARES AT HIAS OFFICE WHICH RESULTED IN ITALIAN POLICE DIRECTING EVACUATION OF BUILDING AND SEARCHING FOR BOMBS; ALL BOMB SCARES HAVE BEEN FALSE ALARMS.

4. RE SOURCES OF THREATS AND OTHER ACTIONS DIRECTED AGAINST HIAS, ELLER EXPRESSED VIEW THAT LETTER BOMB WAS THE ONLY ACTION THAT SHE WOULD ATTRIBUTE TO POSSIBLE ARAB TERRORISTS SINCE LETTER BOMB ENVELOPE CONTAINED PAMPHLETS WRITTEN IN ARABIC. AS FOR PHONE CALLS AND OTHER HARRASSMENTS, SHE ATTRIBUTED THESE TO "UNBALANCED PERSONS" AND DISGRUNTLED HIAS CLIENTS. SHE PLACED PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON LATTER SOURCE SINCE SHE SAID LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY USED CLEARLY IDENTIFIED MANY THREATS AS OF EASTERN EUROPEAN ORIGIN.

5. ELLER STATED THAT ITALIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN AS COOPERATIVE AND HELPFUL AS CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT. SHE HAS REPORTED VARIOUS INCIDENTS TO THE AUTHORITIES WHO HAD ASKED HER TO PROVIDE A LIST OF POSSIBLE SUSPECTS; SHE DECLINED TO DO SO FEARING POSSIBLE LIBEL REPERCUSSIONS IF HER SUSPICIONS INACCURATE. POLICE HAD OFFERED TO PROVIDE ARMED GUARD FOR HIAS OFFICE BUT ELLER DECIDED TO DECLINE OFFER ALTHOUGH SHE HAS HIRED RETIRED ITALIAN POLICEMAN WHO, THOUGH UNARMED, SCREENS VISITORS AND HAS BEEN WHAT SHE CONSIDERS A DETERRENT TO POSSIBLE HOSTILE VISITORS. ACCORDING ELLER, SHE ASKED SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO TAP HIAS OFFICE PHONES IN EFFORT TO TRACE HARRASSERS, BUT JURIDICIAL DIFFICULTIES MADE THIS IMPOSSIBLE

6. ELLER STATED SHE APPRECIATED THAT POLICE PROTECTION AGAINST THREATS AND HARRASSMENT CAN ONLY HAVE LIMITED RESULTS, AND THAT IN HER VIEW ITALIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN AS COOPERATIVE AND HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE. SHE SAID SHE HAD COME TO REGARD THREATS AND HARRASSMENT AS AN UNPLEASANT PART OF THE DAILY ROUTINE OF HER OFFICE, AND ALTHOUGH SHE AND HER STAFF WERE ALERT, THEY WERE NOT RPT NOT WORKING IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONSTANT APPREHENSION. SHE CONFIDED THAT IN HER VIEW THE HIAS NEW YORK OFFICE HAD OVER-REACTED TO INCIDENTS HERE, AND AS A RESULT, SHE HAD CEASED TO SUBMIT DETAILED REPORTS ON SUCH INCIDENTS SINCE THEY CONSUMED INORDINATE AMOUNT

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OF TIME AND IMPEDED HERE REGULAR WORK. SHE ASKED SPECIFICALLY THAT HER COMMENTS ON HIAS NEW YORK'S OVER-REACTION BE FULLY PROTECTED, AND WE ASSURED HER THAT THIS WOULD BE DONE.

5. KORACH INFORMED US THAT HIS EXPERIENCE WITH THREATS WAS VERY RECENT. EARLY THIS YEAR HE HAD RECEIVED AN ENVELOPE CONTAINING WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS "CLASSIC" ANTI-SEMITIC LITERATURE. ON MARCH 1 THERE HAD BEEN A BOMB SCARE AT THE IRC OFFICE WHICH WAS A FALSE ALARM. ON APRIL 16 HE HAD RECEIVED A DEATH THREAT TELEGRAM AND ON APRIL 19 A LETTER CONTAINING A BULLET (REFTEL). HE SAID THAT

TELEGRAM AND BULLET LETTER COMING IN QUICK SUCCESSION HAD SHAKEN HIM UP, BUT HE RECOGNIZED THAT SUCH HARRASSMENTS MUST BE CONSIDERED AS OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS. RE SOURCE OF THREATS TO IRC, HE LISTED POSSIBILITIES AS DISGRUNTLED CLIENTS, NEO-FASCIST ITALIAN POLITICAL PARTY MSI AND JUST PLAIN NUTS. HE ALSO MENTIONED "EASTERN EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITES" AS POSSIBLE SOURCE. HE DEFINITELY RULED OUT ARAB TERRORISTS AS SOURCE.

7. KORACH SAID HE HAD REPORTED ALL INCIDENTS TO THE ITALIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES WHO HAD BEEN ATTENTIVE, COOPERATIVE AND HELPFUL. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD HIRED A PERSON TO PROVIDE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SECURITY TO THE IRC OFFICE BY MONITORING VISITORS AND KEEPING AN EYE OUT FOR STRANGE PACKAGES, ETC.

8. KORACH EXPRESSED GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH COOPERATION OF ITALIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES AND EXPRESSED APPREHENSION THAT IF IRC PRESSED ITALIANS TOO HARD ON THIS MATTER THAT THIS COULD JEOPARDIZE CONTINUED USE OF ITALY AS TRANSIT POINT FOR JEWS. KORACH SAID THAT HE HAD MADE THIS POINT TO HIS HOME OFFICE AS WELL. HE STATED THAT IF PARTICULAR PROBLEMS ON SUBJECT AROSE, HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH EMBASSY AND WOULD SEEK OUR ASSISTANCE.

9. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF BOTH ELLER'S AND KORACH'S EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH COOPERATION OF ITALIAN AUTHORITIES, WE RECOMMEND AGAINST APPROACHING ITALIANS ON THIS SUBJECT AT THIS TIME, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF KORACH'S COMMENTS THAT TOO MUCH PRESSURE COULD LEAD GOI TO SHUT DOWN TRANSIT FACILITIES FOR JEWS HERE. VOLPE

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